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(1) HIGH SPEED MUSIC DISTRIBUTION: HERE ARE THE SITES TO WATCH!

The biggest problem with distributing music over a network is not the data compression technology. The biggest problem is how to protect the music copyrights. This has been the main barrier faced by music distribution services. In 1999 however, compression technologies such as Liquid Audio have appeared. These have a system to protect artist copyrights and are turning network music distribution into a real business.

MUSIC NETWORK DISTRIBUTION AS A FULL-ON BUSINESS

One direction that MP3 pointed us towards was the actual distribution of music over networks. Theoretically, MP3 is fully capable of music distribution but has the big drawback that there is no system to protect the music copyrights. This meant it could not be used as a business, so network distribution was only an empty dream.

Though for a while not much progress was made, in 1999 a large trend started and currently many companies are starting or testing out music network distribution.

Services that allow test listening of digital audio and actual purchase of music CDs were already in existence some time ago. However, this has been taken one step further with the purpose of letting consumers buy the music data itself. To make that possible, systems are now in place to ensure the security of the music data and prevent illegal copying. However aside from this protection, the service is just as convenient as MP3.

LET'S ACTUALLY BUY SOME DIGITAL AUDIO!

How does network distribution of music actually take place? Let's go through the process of actually purchasing a song, using the distribution system from LiquidAudio Corporation.

The system called LiquidAudio is based on three items. These are an encoder (Liquifier), a distribution system (Liquid Server), and a player (Liquid Player).

The ordinary user is concerned only with the "Liquid Player". To use liquid audio, you first have to obtain this player which is available from that corporation's site.

(3) PROCESS FOR USING LIQUID AUDIO

(4) Obtain the Liquid Audio Player

Download the Liquid Audio Player from the LiquidAudio Player site (<http://www.liquidaudio.co.jp>). Player is available only in the English version.

(5) Connect to the Liquid Audio site.

Connect to the site in order to search for the music you want. This time we connected to the LiquidMusicNetwork (<http://www.liquidmusicnetwork.com>) site provided by Liquid Audio Corporation.

(6) Listen to a song.

Click "Preview" or "LIQUID" on the song name listed there to hear some music. The LIQUID PLAYER then starts up and music streaming play begins.

(7) Check the song you want to buy.

If you want to purchase a song, click on its price or with the check mark on, and click on "AddSelected Tracks ToCart". You can also click on "BuyDownload" on the player.

(8) Start purchasing.

This now takes you to the shopping cart page. If you want to keep buying songs, click "ContinueShopping". If you want to pay up and finish, click "CheckOut".

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LiquidPlayer might first appear to be merely software for playing music data, the same as MP3 players, etc. In fact, the player is capable of playing MP3 data other than LiquidPlayer type data. The real value of this player is discovered when you continually connect to sites using the Liquid Audio system.

First of all, display on your browser, a web site that sells LiquidAudio type files. If you then find and click on a file you want to hear, then LiquidPlayer automatically starts up and music streaming play begins. If you are using Netscape Communicator, a "Warning: Security problem" dialog appears, so here if you select "Open" and then click "OK", the player starts up and song play can begin. If you turn

off the "Always show this query when opening this type of file," then you won't need to answer these dialog questions all the time.

The amount of play time in which you can hear the song differs according to the song but data for demo listening usually lasts from 30 seconds to 1 minute. However, the sound quality is extremely high so it is easy to get a good feel for the song. There are "Art", "Promo" and "Notes" buttons on the player. Clicking these will show CD jacket images and song lists, etc.

If you like one of the songs you heard and want to buy it, click "Buy Download". The WWW browser then switches and that specified song name is recorded from among the "tracks". If you want to test listen to more songs, then click "Continue Shopping". When ready to complete the purchase process, click "CheckOut".

You should see the process below for the rest of the procedure. This is mainly the flow from credit card entry, to obtaining a password, to entering the password, to start downloading and then ending. You can play the song you just obtained as much as you like while offline but there are restrictions on use such as trying to record onto a CD-R, etc.

Besides selling music data, LiquidAudio is also used as a demo listening player so you won't always be able to purchase a song. In those cases, you can't use buttons such as "Buy Download."

IS THE CD A THING OF THE PAST?

Here we introduced you to systems using LiquidAudio. However a number of the same type systems have already made an appearance and each of their companies is starting regular business operations. Network distribution is likely to be starting in significant numbers even in Japan by the year 2000 so that competition will likely reach a fever pitch.

This brings up the issue of what the future fate of the music CD will be. Some people say the CD will disappear and the record companies will become a thing of the past. But those are probably not very likely to happen. We cannot deny the possibility that the music CD will evolve into a music DVD, yet the music CD including its role as a backup medium is likely to remain with us. Since digital audio music has become popular, buying music CDs to fill out one's collection is likely to become a fixed

habit. As for record companies, they are certainly doing their part to provide sales routes. They also fill a role in all kinds of promotions and in creating media contents, etc. Of course their format may change due to the effect of digital audio and network media distribution but nothing is likely to suddenly disappear.

You can also say that network music distribution has currently just gotten started. Even in the US, music CDs are the main sales item and sales of data are definitely still small. The future offers a high possibility that network distribution will become the main offering and network-compatible portable (or cellular) players will appear. However, in 2 years from now, we suppose things will not really change very much.

(9) Enter your card No.

A security page appears when you want to make a purchase. First of all, enter your credit card No. Below that there is a "PassportCheck" item. If this is the first time you are making a purchase then select, "I need to get a LiquidPassport" and then click, "BuyMusic".

(10) Enter the information needed for your password.

To setup a password to prevent illegal use of your credit card, enter the required personal information and password handling, etc.

(11) Set the password.

After all other tasks are finished you will be asked for your password. Here, enter the password you previously obtained. You will need this password later on to buy other LiquidAudio songs so don't forget it.

(12) Start the download

Finally, a page appears to let you start the download. Click the song or the album name and the download then starts.

(13) Finish

When the download is finished, a LiquidAudio file with a key icon is saved in your specified location.

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THE MUSIC DISTRIBUTION BUSINESS IS GROWING FAST! HERE ARE THE SITES TO WATCH!

A Digital Audio Search Site?

Though the major companies are just getting started in network music distribution, energetic efforts are already being made in network distribution using MP3 and RealAudio. This is mostly centered on the independent label may not always seem up-to-date yet artists who embrace new ideas are making aggressive moves and starting to put network distribution to work.

What actually does the work of collecting these information and songs and provides them to the user are digital audio search sites. Though these are search sites they aren't limited to just displaying a location. Some sites also store music contents in their own server and distribute them to users for a fee.

Some of these search sites are run by individuals. However as you might expect, it is the corporate sites that hold the widest range of information and content. These sites store a variety of music including great songs not generally available at record companies or retail stores. We picked two from among a number of sites, now we'll show you how to use them.

Searching For Music On MUSIC.CO.JP

The domain name MUSIC.CO.JP is also the corporate name which makes it easy to learn. This corporation has been using MIDI and RealAudio to distribute music over the Internet even before MP3 became popular. This site has been a big factor in introducing network music distribution to Japan. MUSIC.CO.JP distributes a diverse range of data, however here we will just show you how "MP3.music.co.jp" method for handling MP3.

If your system is installed with RealPlayer or MP3, then using the "MP3.music.co.jp" method is really simple. You can download RealPlayer from RealAudio Corporation (<http://www.jp.real.com>).

When you open up MP3.music.co.jp, you'll see "Artist Search" and "Label Search". These will allow you to make a search for the artist you want. The artist

and the label are also displayed as lists so just click on an item you like to have more information displayed on it. Clicking on a name at any label displays a SONGLIST with a "FREE" icon at its right. Clicking on this icon automatically starts up RealPlayer and you can listen to the demo music. The demo listening time varies according to the artist and the song. A listening time of a minute or longer will give you a good idea of what the song is like.

(14)

Open MP3.music.co.jp

Connect to the MP3.music.co.jp site (<http://mp3.music.co.jp>) and read the various caution items there.

(15)

Search for a song and give it a test listen.

Search for a song using artist search or label search (and others) on the top page. You will see a "Free" icon on some pages. Clicking this icon starts up RealPlayer and you can listen to music demos.

(16)

Get a MUSIC.CO.JP account

Select a payment method before downloading a song you want. If you already use the QQQ System, Smash, or Acosis then you don't have to go through any special procedure. If buying by credit card, then click "Service Usage Method" (or similar item), enter your credit card and other personal information and acquire an ID/Pass for MUSIC.CO.JP.

(17)

Start the song purchase process.

Clicking on the "Download" button to the right of the song, shifts to the "User Login" screen. Here you can select from different payment methods. The figure above shows paying by credit card.

(18)

Start the download.

After selecting a payment method, a screen appears for starting the download. Then just click "Start Download" to begin downloading the song.

(19)

Listen To Demos and Buy Music At MUSIC.CO.JP

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You can also download a song you like as a data file. A detailed explanation of how to buy is given separately however the file is an MP3 file so use an MP3 player you like in order to enjoy the song. The price for each song is an easy-to-handle 100 to 200 yen (1 to 2 dollars). These are MP3 files so you can copy them onto a portable MP3 player and enjoy them wherever you go.

The MP3 files downloaded from MP3.music.co.jp are embedded with "LUCENT MARK" and "DCWC" electronic watermarks to confirm that they are copyrighted information. If distributed without permission over the Internet, this watermarked information will supposedly help detect the unauthorized user. Remember to avoid any unauthorized music copying.

Enjoying Music On Real Jukebox

RealAudio is used worldwide as a system for distributing video and audio. This system includes "RealJukebox" which focuses mainly on network distribution. Using the "RealJukebox" software allows the user to easily download and play music (or video) distributed over the RealJukebox system.

Using RealJukebox is really simple. Download RealJukeboxBasic from the RealJukeBox site (<http://www.jp.real.com/products/realjukebox/>) and install it in your PC.

You can play music CDs on RealJukebox but it is mainly for network distribution. To obtain a song, click "getmusic" to display the information and switch between "GetMusic" and "FindMusic" tags search for the music you want. Clicking on letters such as "MP3" below "CLICK TO DOWNLOAD" starts downloading the music and you can play it from a list. The songs are divided into pay songs and free songs. Many free songs are available. The music information comes from a variety of sites which eliminates the burden of the user having to search out the music himself.

There is of course the Internet acting as middleman but on RealJukebox all

one has to do is select the music you want based on song information shown on the RealJukebox screen and the song then plays. As the name says, this is an Internet-compatible jukebox that lets you enjoy all kinds of songs from rock to classic. Music offered is mostly from Europe and the US but if operation becomes firmly established then information geared for Japan will also be offered.

(20) DOWNLOADING MUSIC USING REALJUKEBOX

(21)

RealJukeBox startup and site search.

Start up RealJukeBox and select "getmusic". Information is then acquired from the Internet, the information separated into tags and displayed. Search the music using the "GetMusic" and "FindMusic" tags.

(22)

Start the song download.

Click "MP3" below "Download" to start the download of song data on RealJukeBox.

(23)

Play the song.

When all the songs are downloaded, a folder is stored inside RealJukeBox. You can of course play back songs from this folder.

(24)

INTERNET MUSIC DISTRIBUTION SITES

MP3.music.co.jp

[<http://mp3.music.co.jp/>]

This total music site was the first to start network distribution in Japan. Besides MP3 it also offers MIDI and even distributes Karaoke data. What is important to notice is that this site has a lot of MP3 and access. It has over 1500 songs on file and has more scheduled. Nothing is sold out and there are no discard disks here so enjoy the site whenever you like. Music centers around minor league groups but famous artists also take part.

Real Guide

[<http://www.realguide.ne.jp/>]

This site provides RealAudio information. This site offers all kinds of diverse information including music trial (demo) listening, live music and news using RealAudio music streaming. It also broadcasts items and events such as musician promotion videos. You could call it a RealAudio TV and radio station site, it is a "real guide".

WindowMedia guide

[<http://webevents.jp.msn.com/>]

This is a Microsoft site offering music and video network-distributed media contents information. Beside music and entertainment related media contents, a variety of diverse information including sports, finance and news is also provided. Besides audio information, video is also distributed. This site is also active in promotion videos, etc.

Lycos Music

[<http://mp3.lycos.com/>]

This is a search page exclusively for MP3 provided by the LYCOS search site. However, LYCOS Japan does not offer much here and most hits are on English page sites. The music contents are also mostly from the US and Europe. Use the same search procedure as other pages when searching on LYCOS.

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